

City of Alexandria
Department of Planning and Zoning
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**Landmark/Van Dorn Advisory Group
Meeting Notes
Monday, December 17, 2007**

Lecture Pad Notes

Brackets [] indicate additions made by planning staff for clarification

To initiate the interactive portion of the meeting on issues, challenges and opportunities in the planning area, consultant Matt Bell of EEK posed a number of questions to the Advisory Group.

Questions

1. *What works well [in the Study Area]?*
2. *What doesn't work well [in the Study Area]?*
3. *What is the future of some of the area's older developments (shopping centers)?*
4. *What is the heart of the community, if that exists? What defines that heart?*
5. *What is missing [in the Study Area]?*
6. *How does one sustain and enhance the existing housing stock?*
7. *What is the philosophy of transit? Do people use transit? What works and what doesn't work? What are the challenges? Do people have to drive there or walk there?*
8. *Where do people in the community go for [outdoor] recreation (to have picnics and go on walks)? If it does not exist in the community, where do you have to go for open space? Do you have to drive or walk to those places?*
9. *What other places in the region are models for what we want in this community?*

1

Arlington turnabout – shacks and shanties, industrial
Metro dead center
Walkable 35-40 restaurants in 3 blocks
Average age 35; all the DINKS [dual income no kids]
Here – [my] restaurant [is in] decline- traffic battle across WW Bridge. Traffic on Duke is the problem.
Traffic is a huge piece – have transportation staffer here

Concern – losing the flavor of the community – seniors here – children – day care-

2

Would not walk to the mall – not safe now. Make it more accessible.
Economic Sustain[ability] Task Force adopted - . Residences don't give back.
Mall now 27% of the revenue it had back in 1990 – continue as a viable shopping center.
Major retail area – the only major retail destination in Alexandria.
2 areas across from Mall zoned for high density in 1992, - never developed
Econ[omic] sustain[ability] – 3 things to take burden of residential
Landmark Mall – needs to be walkable for locals + users – shoppers
“Town Center” – vibrant –

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[Question posed by Consultant: What other activities? Civic? Performing?]
All that + more
So much land there. Had a skating rink here [elsewhere in Alexandria] – gone for ABC
[store]
Woodbridge getting a Wegmans
Need an Orvis, Wegmans, Walmart
A way to attract people here
Don't have to attract people to park in Old Town
Movies, Performing Arts Schlesinger Center – NOVA major performing arts
Major
High-end restaurants. Some focus- not necessarily just one thing
Get the parking out of front- behind, below
Cam Station - close, but not safe to walk.
Even along Van Dorn or Duke.
Smaller Shuttle bus to destination

4

Green building, pedestrian friendly, environmental
Don't need to look like Old Town
No Brick, More forward-thinking architecture.

Question posed by Consultant: What cities are good models?
Prague, Seattle Reston Town Center
Modern but sense of wild west
Charlotte, NC
Pentagon Row – easy to park, good retail mix.
Reston – family-friendly-feels safe, lots of people walking, well lit
[Alexandria is] building around our only industrial zone- use parkland to separate.
Provide jobs, services; housing shouldn't be right next door. ¼ mile

[Question posed by Consultant: Housing, decreasing affordable housing, astonishing? Reactions? This area has highest concentration of City's affordable housing?]

Need affordable condos

Concerned about sustaining a mix [of] - rentals and higher end both – losing the mix now.

Don't tear down what we have in order to build something more expensive that has a small affordable part

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Good to retain the existing affordable

Attract high-end retail- they will look at the customers nearby.

[Question posed by Consultant: Is sense of place based on size or what's there? What constitutes a community? What are the ingredients for successful community?]

Height and density hasn't led to a feeling of community in Alexandria – no experience with that here.

Old Town is our experience.

Carlyle – empties out at night – not enough attention from the City to make it a community, e.g. sponsor music events at 6:00 PM – people started to plan, sense of community.

Places where people gather. Cameron Station has developed a community – transport to Metro. Alexandria didn't focus on developing a center at Carlyle.

Carlyle not done yet.

Give people a place to go – open space – skating rink, park

Landmark is trying – soft play area works well

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Network of sidewalks – streetscape

Rosslyn, Ballston, Clarendon – activity on the street – energy – strong street network, safe environment –

Critical mass – West End lacks it.

Every businesses is an auto destination.

Affordable rents for individual merchants

Vacancies at Landmark, Safeway.

Keep the locals [businesses] with the national [businesses]

What if nobody redevelops?

[Attorney representing General Growth Properties, owner and operator of Landmark Mall (Sears/K-Mart owns the Sears store, Federated Stores owns Macy's, and each owns a substantial share of the site) responds to question]

GGP is working out how to relocate store[s], how to keep stores operating while redeveloping

Are there other malls with the same tenants?

[GGP response]

Sears has specialty stores; there are other names at Federated.
Anchor stores not as important as before

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Working toward Nov-Dec 08

Would like to know [if] GGP is working together with us on the same schedule.

Why are we here? Can't forget about the property owners.

Get Plan going, other owners can also move.

Other issues besides GGP

80% of area is not GGP. The rest of it should go on. Good to have Mike
[McGuire] present on project.

Public Comment

41-year resident. Should be a discussion to include long-term residents; Seminary Valley
– have the mile-long yard sale; can't have towers up there

We've already done this [planning process] before; GGP had focus groups; Suggest that
break meetings up into groups; [each meeting should be about a different topic
such as]

1. transportation,
2. business,
3. housing;

allow the community to be part of this discussion. Get rid of the advisory group, have
separate discussion on separate topics.

“West End” needs an identity – develop an idea about what that is – entrance off the
highway – give an identity

I have ice rink for sale

Public Art- can do a lot for development

West End is way behind.

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Arlington – public art important in character

[Another example of great places is] Montgomery Co. – Bethesda, Silver Spring –
co municipal garages

[Jack Sullivan's] pioneering document – West End Principles – [should be
disseminated to AG members]

[from recording - Disagree with that; only 3 civic associations have approved it; rest
didn't; change name of it]

Revenue – City is losing millions and millions in revenue

I want the Four Seasons back. Mr. Choi – owns CompUSA block. Sunoco.

Need those owners

Youth Detention – move it- could use that site

Make Landmark a landmark! Put something to attract people – aquarium, hotels.

Duke and Van Dorn can't be Main Street – it's how to get through – build the community on other streets – little inside streets we live on.
Infrastructure – roads, utilities already can't handle the traffic.

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If [City] make[s] this a destination – bring National Harbor people [tourists + visitors] here.
Beauregard – the Fountains. “Western Gateway”; Real West End is across I-395.
nothing across –
Examples [of great places] – Kansas City – West Edge. Moshe Safdie [architect of Kansas City performing arts center]
What financial incentives? Until market settles, won't be much movement